DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 255 546 TM 850 146

TITLE	Scholastic Aptitude Test Results: 1982-83.
INSTITUTION	Fort Worth Independent School District, Tex. Dept. of Research and Evaluation.
PUB DATE	20 Oct 83
NOTE	19p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*College Bound Students; *College Entrance Examinations; Comparative Analysis; *Data Interpretation; High Schools; High School Seniors; National Norms; Program Evaluation; Test Coaching; *Test Results
IDENTIFIERS	*Fort Worth Independent School District TX; *Scholastic Aptitude Test

ABSTRACT

This study of the 1982-83 Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores of Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD) seniors indicated an increase in scores over the previous year. The FWISD seniors (n=3,659) scored substantially lower than the national and Texas seniors. However, Fort Worth students took fewer traditional academic subjects. Examination of demographic factors which influence test scores revealed that the FWISD seniors tested included a higher proportion of minority students. Based upon the information summarized in this report, several recommendations were made. These included encouraging students to participate in advanced academic electives and SAT testing. The efforts toward academic improvement at the middle and high school levels must be intensified. Efforts to prepare college bound seniors to take the SAT through special preparation classes should be expanded. These classes are designed to help students improve their test taking skills as they relate to the most frequently encountered question types on the SAT. (DWH).

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FORT WORTH INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
FORT WORTH, TEXAS

1982-1983
SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE TEST RESULTS

DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

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FORT WORTH INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

1982-1983
SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE TEST RESULTS

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October 20, 1983

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE TEST (SAT) RESULTS

1982-83

DESCRIPTION: The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) is a college entrance examination given several times a year throughout the nation to college bound students. It consists of a verbal and mathematical section with each part scored separately on a scale of 200 to 800. The two sections are summed for a total score.

POPULATION SERVED: Of the 3,659 graduating seniors in the FWISD class of 1983, 1083 seniors (30%) took the SAT. Nationally, about one-third of all high school seniors take the SAT. Thirty percent of the FWISD seniors tested classified themselves as minorities compared to 19% nationally. The family economic levels of the FWISD seniors who took the SAT were comparable to the economic levels of those who took the test nationwide.

RESEARCH FINDINGS: For the first time since 1978, FWISD seniors showed an increase in SAT scores over the previous year. FWISD 1983 graduates scored 13 points higher than 1982 seniors. This rise in scores came at a time when the National average remained the same and the average for Texas showed a slight decline. While FWISD seniors scored substantially lower than the National and Texas seniors (52 and 24 points respectively), they also took fewer traditional academic subjects, expecially in mathematics and science.

RECOMMENDATIONS: It is recommended that: 1) continued effort be placed on having college bound students take more advanced academic subjects, 2) efforts to broaden participation in SAT testing be expanded, 3) on-going efforts to improve academic instruction at the middle school and high school levels be intensified, and 4) classes be provided to help students improve their test taking skills as they relate to the types of questions most often encountered on the SAT.

Program Manager: Twain Morrow
Evaluator: Fae Lysiak
Research and Evaluation
Date: October 1983

SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE TEST RESULTS

1982-1983

WHAT IS THE SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE TEST?

The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) is a college entrance examination published and administered as the Admissions Testing Program of the College Board. The SAT is given to about one-third of the three million high school seniors in the United States. Scores obtained on the SAT are required by many colleges and universities for admission. The highest possible score that can be obtained on the total test is 1600. There are two parts to the test--a verbal section and a math section. The highest possible score for each part is 800. Of the four types of questions in the verbal section, two types—the sentence completions and reading passages--yield a reading comprehension subscore. Performance on the analogy and antonym sections produce the vocabulary subscore. Verbal subscores are reported in two digits on a twenty to eighty point scale.

Another test score reported by the Admission Testing Program of the College Board is that on the Test of Standard Written English. This test is effective in helping colleges to place students in the most appropriate English courses. It evaluates the students' ability to recognize standard written English. Scores on the test are reported in two digits on a twenty to sixty point scale.

SAT RESULTS

For the first time since the 1977-1978 school year the Fort Worth Independent School District's SAT scores have turned upward (see Table I and Appendix, Graph 1). This increase of thirteen points (six points on the verbal and seven points on the math test) comes at a time when national scores remained the same and Texas seniors showed a downward movement.

FWISD experienced a decline in the number of students taking the SAT in 1983 from 1982 levels. Overall, 159 fewer seniors took the test. Anglo students accounted for 93% of the drop in participation. When compared to that of the previous year the loss of students did not appreciably affect the economic profile of the participants.

TABLE I

Comparison of 1982 and 1983
SAT Scores

	1982	1983
Verbal	402	408
Math	426	433
TOTAL	828	841
Number & Percent of Graduates Tested	1242/33%	1083/30%

HOW DO FWISD SCORES COMPARE TO NATIONAL AND STATE SAT SCORES?

Fort Worth Independent School District seniors scored fifty-two (52) points lower than the national average of 893. Their verbal score was seventeen (17) points lower than national levels and their math score was thirty-five (35) points below the national

average. FWISD seniors scored twenty-four (24) points lower than Texas seniors, four points (4) lower on the verbal test, and twenty (20) points lower on the math test (see Table II and Appendix, Graph 2).

TABLE II

Comparison of SAT Scores
of FWISD Graduates
With National and Texas Graduates

	FWISD	NATIONAL	TEXAS
Verbal	408	425	412
Math	433	468	453
TOTAL	841	893	865
Reading Comprehension	41.1	42.6	41.6
Vocabulary	40.6	42.5	41.0
Test of Standard English	40.4	42.3	41.7

The average reading comprehension subscore of FWISD seniors was 41.1 whereas the national average was 42.6 and the Texas average was 41.6. The FWISD vocabulary subtest average was 40.6. In comparison, the national average was 42.5 and the Texas average was 41.0. On the Test of Standard Written English FWISD seniors averaged 40.4, while the national average was 42.3, and Texas seniors averaged 41.7. SAT scores have been declining since 1973 for students nationally. Texas and FWISD students have generally shown similar declines in scores. The national group showed a slight increase in 1982 and remained the same in 1983. Texas

seniors continued to show a decrease in 1983. Table III shows the change in SAT scores over time for all three groups (also see Appendix, Graph 3).

TABLE III

A Longitudinal Look at SAT Scores

SCHOOL YEAR	FWISD AVERAGE	NATIONAL AVERAGE	TEXAS AVERAGE
1972-73	882	926	912
1973-74	878	924	914
1974-75	867	906	898
1975-76	844	903	893
1976-77	839	899	888
1977-78	852	897	885
1978-79	847	894	874
1979-80	842	890	871
1980-81	835	890	870
1981-82	828	893	868
1982-83	841	893	865

WHAT ARE THE ECONOMIC AND ETHNIC DIFFERENCES AMONG THE FWISD SENIORS, TEXAS SENIORS, AND NATIONAL SENIORS TESTED?

Of the 3,659 graduating seniors in the class of 1983, thirty percent or 1,083 took the SAT. Nationally, about one-third of the graduating seniors took the SAT. In Texas thirty-two percent of the seniors took the test. The proportion of graduates who described themselves as members of a minority ethnic group was thirty percent in FWISD, nineteen percent nationally, and twenty-five percent in Texas. Of the seniors in the national group, only 80.3% attended public school. In the Texas group 91.6% attended public school.

The median income of FWISD students is slightly higher than the national group and substantially lower than the Texas group. The relationship between income and SAT scores is great, indicating that students scoring below 800 come from substantially lower income families than those scoring above 800. On the basis of the strong correlation between family income levels and SAT scores, FWISD averages should closer approximate the national scoring levels.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE DIFFERENCES IN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS OF THE FWISD AND THE NATIONAL AND STATE SENIORS TESTED?

FWISD students took fewer traditional academic subjects especially in math, foreign language, science, and social science than the national seniors and slightly fewer than Texas seniors. The mean number of academic years of study are given in Table IV for the three groups.

TABLE IV

Years of Study in Academic Subjects of
1982-83 SAT Participants

	FWISD MEAN YEARS	NATIONAL MEAN YEARS	TEXAS MEAN YEARS
English	3.97	3.99	3.93
Math	3.37	3.62	3.52
Foreign Language	1.49	2.23	1.37
Biological Science	1.29	1.40	1.30
Physical Science	1.60	1.85	1.78
Social Science	2.99	3.23	3.09
TOTAL	14.71	16.32	14.99

Overall, a smaller proportion of FWISD seniors indicated they had taken honors classes than did Texas seniors (Table V). The most notable differences were in math and science where the proportion of Texas seniors taking these honors classes was four and three percent higher respectively than the proportion of FWISD seniors. The proportion of FWISD seniors taking honors classes in English was three percent higher than Texas seniors and six percent higher than the national group. A larger proportion of FWISD seniors had taken honors classes than the national group, except in math, where the national proportion was one percent higher.

TABLE V

Percent of SAT Participants who Took
Honors Classes in High School

	FWISD % TAKING	NATIONAL % TAKING	TEXAS % TAKING
English	23	17	20
Math	14	15	18
Foreign Language	8	7	9
Biological Science	13	8	12
Physical Science	9	8	13
Social Science	10	10	9

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

SAT scores of 1982-83 FWISD seniors showed improvement over previous seniors for the first time since 1977-78. FWISD seniors are still lower than the national and Texas seniors on the verbal and math sections of the SAT. Their subscores on reading comprehension, vocabulary, and the Test of Standard Written English, are also below the national and state groups.

Examination of demographic factors that influence test scores show that the group of FWISD seniors tested consisted of a higher proportion of minority students than the national and state groups. Although, their median income was slightly higher than the national group, it was substantially lower than the Texas groups. FWISD seniors spent less time in the traditional academic courses than the national or Texas group. This difference was greatest in the math and science courses and could account for some of the differences in the math achievement of FWISD seniors and the other two groups. FWISD seniors took as many years of English as the other groups and more honors classes in English than the national and state groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The 1982-83 school year upswing in FWISD averages on the SAT are truly encouraging. When this report is combined with the knowledge that 1983 middle school scores were up substantially on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS), that the school Board has strengthened academic core graduation requirements, that weighted grade point averages have been instituted to encourage participation in academic electives, and emphasis is being placed on SAT preparation, prospects for still higher SAT scores seem good.

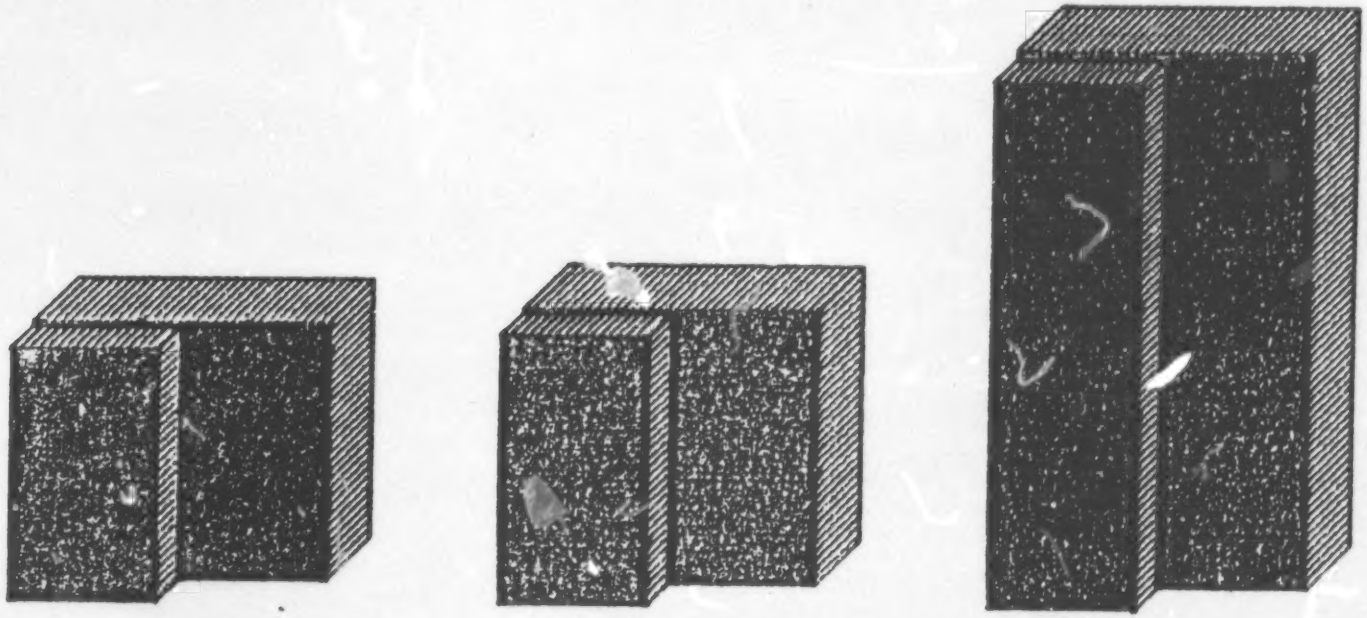
Based on the information summarized in this report, several steps are necessary to insure stronger scores and broader participation in the future. First, since FWISD seniors had taken generally fewer academic courses than their state and national counterparts, wider participation in advanced academic electives must be encouraged. Recent action by the School Board concerning core requirements and weighted grade point averages lend support to this objective. Second, broader participation in SAT testing must be encouraged. FWISD has shown the ability to move toward closing the gap with state and national scores while engendering broader minority participation than the state and national groups. Third, the ongoing efforts toward academic improvement at the middle and high school levels must be intensified. Finally, efforts to prepare college-bound seniors to take the SAT through special preparation classes should be expanded.

APPENDIX

COMPARISON OF 1982 TO 1983 MEAN SAT SCORES IN FWISD

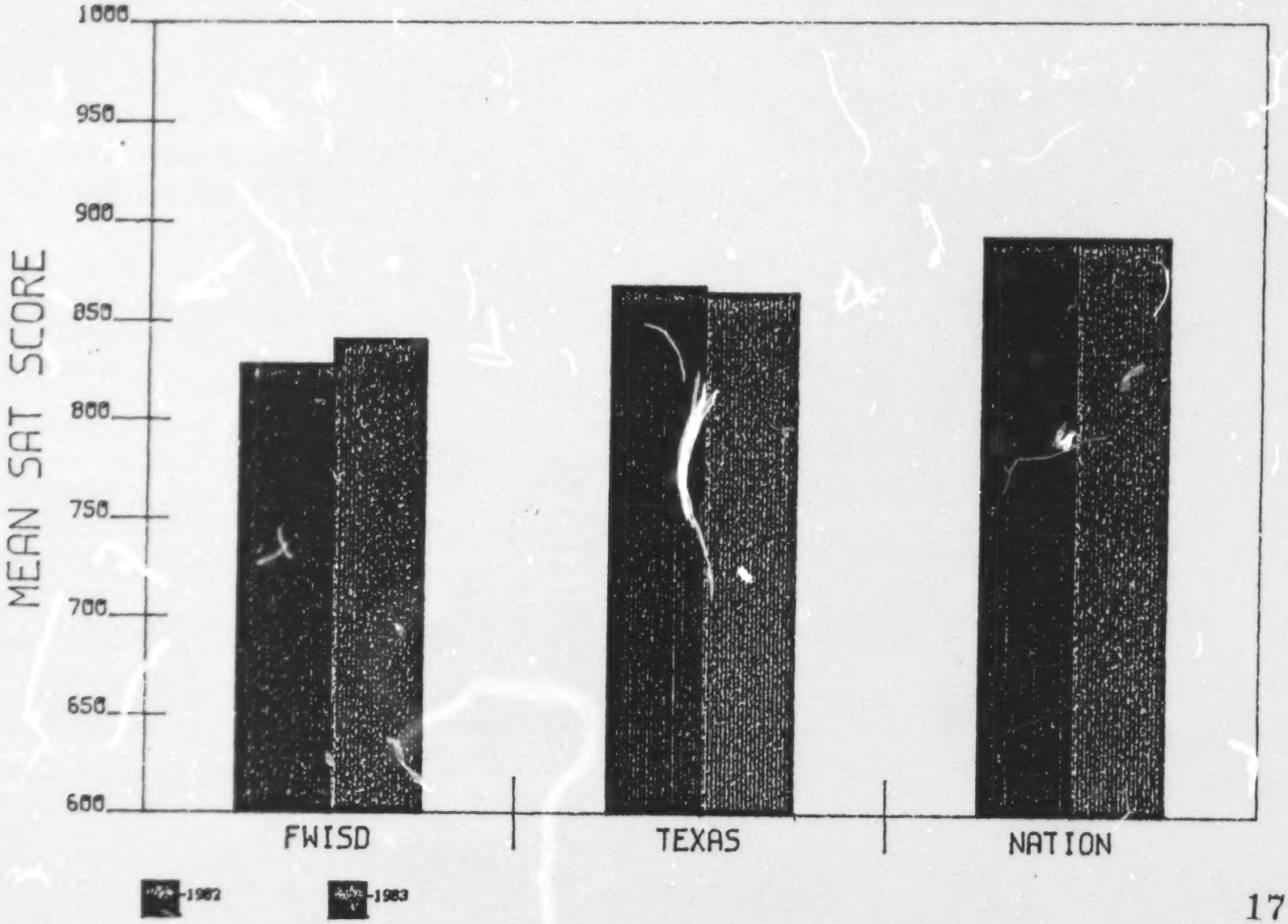
	VERBAL	MATH	COMBINED
1983	408	433	841
1982	402	426	828

MEAN SAT SCORES



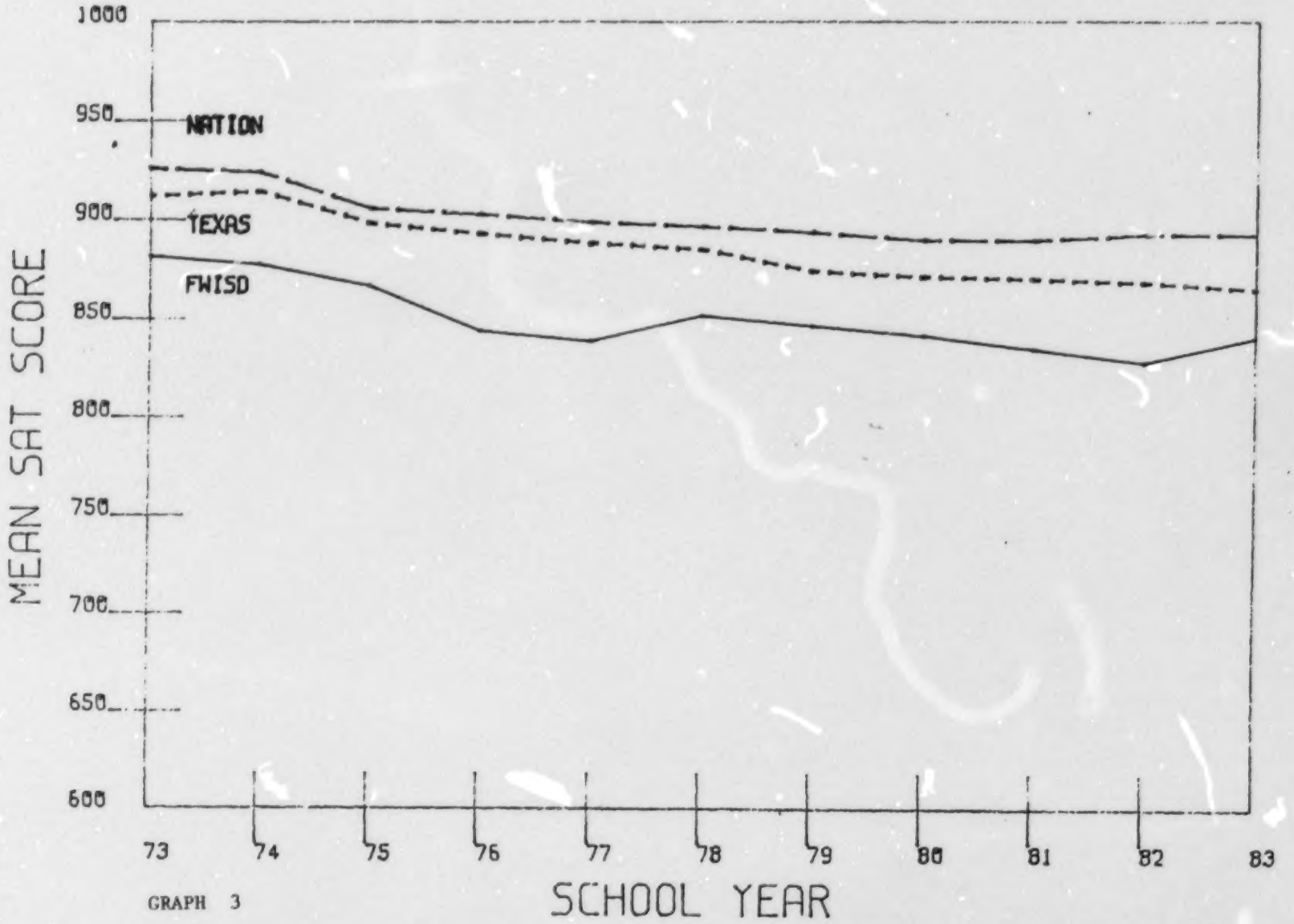
VERBAL | MATH | COMBINED

GRAPH 1


MEAN COMBINED SAT SCORES: 82 VS 83
MEAN SAT SCORE
1000
950
900
850
800
750
700
650
600
FWISD
TEXAS
NATION
1982
1983

GRAPH 2

MEAN COMBINED SAT SCORES OVER TIME



GRAPH 3